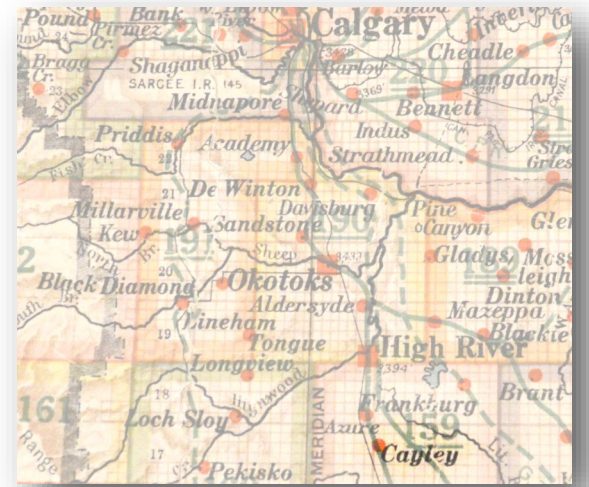Cayley, 1912.

Main Street, Cayley, 1907.

Cayley

Cayley is a hamlet in the County of Foothills, south of High River.

It was named after Hugh St. Quentin Cayley who was a law graduate of Toronto University. He came west to Calgary in the early 1880s where he first worked as a Dominion land agent and later as a lawyer. In 1885 he purchased the Calgary Herald. He also served as clerk of the District Court and later served on the territorial government of the Northwest Territories.
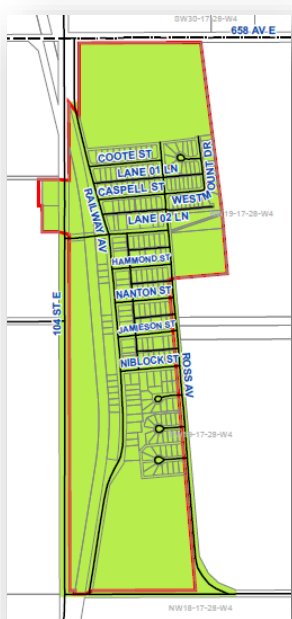
Stockyards established in the area in 1892 immediately after the C. & E. Railroad was built. Cattle were trailed to the yards by the thousands, and Cayley soon became the biggest livestock shipping point in all the Northwest Territories. Thousands of head of horses were also shipped through Cayley as breeding stock destined for buyers around the world. Eleven years after the stockyards established, in 1903, a townsite was surveyed. A post office, general store, hotel, lumber yard and meat market were among the business that opened that first year. The settlement grew so rapidly that on Aug. 17, 1904 it was incorporated as a village. The first school opened in 1908, replaced by a two-story brick school in 1920.

The village reached its peak in 1920, but the depression years significantly impacted Cayley. The hotel closed and was dismantled, followed by the closure of the bank. Improved highways and the introduction of cattle liners also affected the stockyards. Cattle were being trucked to Calgary rather than being trailed to the stockyards at Cayley. The stockyards closed in 1956.

Hamlet of Cayley today.

Today, Cayley has a store, school, church, fire hall and numerous houses. *Sources: Under the Chinook Arch — A History of Cayley and Surrounding Areas, and County of Foothills.*